

AWARE PADDLERS HAUL TONS OF TRASH FROM IOWA, ENGLISH RIVERS

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WAPELLO - Hundreds of trash-collecting volunteers reached the Mississippi Saturday as the fourth annual Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) came to a close.

This year, the weeklong river cleanup took participants to the Iowa and English rivers in southeast Iowa. Beginning near Iowa City on June 17, the expedition reached the mouth of the Iowa River on June 24. Project AWARE 2006 ended with a celebratory luncheon in Wapello.



Along the way, the more than 150 volunteers collected a record amount of garbage, pulling an estimated 24 tons of tires, appliances, pop cans, glass bottles, car parts, bicycles, discarded clothes and other items from the rivers. Roughly 85 percent of that garbage was recycled.

"I just think it's something that needs to be done," said AWARE volunteer and Van Meter resident Dick Howard. "The river's been mistreated for a long time."

Low water levels and a more-populous surrounding area helped volunteers find much more trash than in previous years. On the first day of Project AWARE 2006, volunteers found more garbage than they collected during last year's entire event, which covered the Little Sioux River. All told, this year's haul tripled the amount found in 2005.

As in previous years, volunteers removed all that garbage by hand, heading out in canoes and kayaks to scour the water and riverbanks for trash. Volunteers could join the expedition for as little as a day or as long as the entire week. The project also provided free canoes and camping, low-cost meals and evening "infotainment" programs about natural resources topics.

Check www.iowaprojectaware.com for more information.

Some of the estimated 12-tons of scrap metal collected during this year's AWARE will end up in a work of art. As in previous years, Ogden artist David Williamson will help volunteers mold AWARE-collected metal into a sculpture. Look for interactive metal-smelting and sculpture-molding events during July's Johnson County Fair and August's Iowa State Fair.

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